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## Is Your Athlete Getting Enough Protein?

### PROTEIN IN A YOUTH ATHLETE'S DIET

Many youth athletes believe protein is the main nutrient needed in their diets.

While protein may not be the main nutrient, it does indeed play a crucial role in an athlete's balanced nutrition, and it is an important building block for developing strength and peak performance.

### Good protein sources for youth athletes

Athletes need to consume a wide variety of high-quality protein foods to grow, repair, and maintain muscle. Some examples of good protein sources (and recommended serving sizes) are:

Food	Serving Size	Grams of Protein
Chicken breast	3 oz	25 g
Ground beef	4 oz	24 g
Cottage cheese	½ c	12 g
Yogurt	8 oz	11 g
Cooked black beans	½ cup	8 g
Peanut butter	2 tbsp	7 g
Egg	1 large	7 g
Mixed nuts	¼ cup	5 g

### How much protein do youth athletes need?

The amount of protein needed by a youth athlete varies based on their athletic goals. Per the TrueSport Nutrition Guide, the following amounts of protein are recommended daily for these different types of athletes:

**Endurance:** 0.54-0.64 g per pound of body weight

**Strength (gaining muscle mass):** 0.72-0.81 g per pound of body weight

**Strength (maintaining muscle mass):** 0.54-0.64 g per pound of body weight

**Weight Restricted:** 0.63-0.81 g per pound of body weight



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## Protein, continued

### When should youth athletes eat protein?

The body's ability to recover from games, practices, or intense workouts requires adequate rest and proper nutrition. An important component of the recovery process is consuming both carbohydrates and protein shortly after exercise to restore muscle glycogen and stimulate muscle protein synthesis. Eating protein after resistance training decreases physical breakdown and encourages muscle growth.

Eating several small meals that include about 30 grams of protein throughout the day will also support training and muscle-building.

### What happens if a youth athlete eats too much protein?

Excess protein may not necessarily be dangerous, but it will also not necessarily cause you to develop bigger muscles, run faster, or jump higher, as there is only so much protein that can be absorbed in the body per day.

### Do youth athletes need to take protein supplements?

Athletes may feel the need to get protein from supplements because they think it is an easier way to put on muscle.

However, they are encouraged to challenge this thought and instead alter their diets to include more protein from proven high-quality sources. Not only is food a better source that gives you many other nutrients, vitamins, and minerals that your body needs, protein supplements can contain ingredients that are unproven to work, loaded with extra sugar and other unhealthy ingredients, or are even dangerous.

